United Nations A/C.1/51/PV.2

General Assembly
Fifty-first session

Official Records

First Committee

2nd Meeting
Thursday, 10 October 1996, 10.00 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou . . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: I should like at the outset to express my profound appreciation to all Members of the United Nations for the honour and privilege they have conferred upon me and my country by electing me as Chairman of this body. I thank you all most warmly for the confidence that you have placed in me. It will be my endeavour to conduct the work of this important body of the General Assembly in a manner that will measure up to your confidence.

Permit me to express my sincere appreciation for the very kind words offered by Ambassador Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations, when he nominated me at the first meeting of the Committee. I request him kindly to convey, on behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, our sincere gratitude to my predecessor, Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, for the skilful and effective manner in which he presided over the proceedings of the Committee last year, as well as for his significant contribution to the results achieved by the First Committee during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Acknowledging that the tasks assigned to the First Committee are not easy, I will count on your complete and invaluable cooperation in dealing with them. I, for my part, will always be available to assist delegations in the work of the Committee. It is gratifying to know that I can also count on the most valuable experience, competence and profound knowledge of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Marrack Goulding; the Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Prvoslav Davinič; and the Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, and his colleagues. On behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, I warmly welcome Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung and his colleagues to the Committee. I am sure that the Committee will benefit from their experience, and we look forward to their support in dealing with the many pressing issues confronting us.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, our heartfelt thanks and special gratitude to the outgoing Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, for the exemplary manner in which he has guided the work of the Committee at all stages over the past few years. His wide knowledge and experience in the field of disarmament and his professional attitude have proved to be of great benefit to all members of the Committee. I wish him a very happy and prosperous retirement.

Election of the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur

The Chairman: I wish to recall the decision of the General Assembly, taken at its 1935th meeting on 22 September 1971, concerning the election procedure with regard to officers of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. In accordance with that decision, nominations of candidates should be limited to one statement for each candidate, after which the Committee should immediately proceed to the election. The First Committee will, therefore, follow that procedure today.

96-86449 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Mr. Meier-Klodt (Germany): Allow me at the outset, Mr. Chairman, to welcome you warmly as Chairman of the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. My delegation has always taken a particularly keen interest in the proceedings of this Committee. We are aware of its opportunities and also of the obstacles that sometimes have to be overcome. On behalf of my entire delegation, I would therefore like to pledge our full support to your endeavours. We are also delighted to see Mr. Davinič and his colleagues who are, as always, ably conducting our affairs. In particular I welcome our new Secretary, Mr. Lin.

On behalf of Ambassador Hoffmann, the Vice-Chairman of the First Committee at the fiftieth session, I now have the honour to nominate Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium as his successor as Vice-Chairman during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

Ambassador Mernier has been the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva since September 1996. From 1994 to 1996 he headed the Disarmament Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels. Ambassador Mernier joined the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1975, and has served successively in Amsterdam and Beirut, as a Belgian representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in Washington, East Berlin and West Berlin and as Ambassador to Seoul.

Obviously, Ambassador Mernier is a very experienced diplomat with a professional profile well suited to this Committee. We will be very pleased to see Ambassador Mernier by your side, Mr. Chairman, as Vice-Chairman of the First Committee, as, I hope, will the entire membership.

The Chairman: I thank the distinguished representative of Germany for nominating Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium for the post of Vice-Chairman. I appreciate the friendly remarks he deemed it proper to address to me. I wish to convey, through him, the Committee's appreciation to Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann for his invaluable contribution to the work of the Committee in his capacity as Vice-Chairman at the fiftieth session.

There being no other nomination, I take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and with established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and declare Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I now call upon the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Albín (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all I should like to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation, our congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We wish you every success in your work. You can of course count on the full support of the Mexican delegation.

On behalf of Ambassador Antonio de Icaza, Vice-Chairman of this Committee at the fiftieth session, I wish to say that it is an honour and a privilege to propose the candidacy of Ambassador Andelfo García for election to the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee at this session. Ambassador Andelfo García has been the Deputy Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations since 1994. In the Foreign Ministry of his country, he has held the posts of Deputy Minister for the Americas and Sovereign Territories and Deputy Minister for International Political Affairs. Ambassador García graduated in law from the National University of Colombia and has a masters degree in Latin American and Caribbean Affairs from New York University. Ambassador García has vast academic experience in the areas of public and private international law. He has been a professor and researcher and has held important academic and administrative positions in prestigious universities in his country.

Those of us who have been fortunate enough to know and work with him have been able to appreciate Ambassador García's talents, skills, tact and great capacity for work, as well as his outstanding personal qualities. For these reasons, it is a privilege for me to nominate Ambassador García for the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee and recommend his election by acclamation.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement nominating Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia for the post of Vice-Chairman. Reflecting the sentiments of all the members of the Committee, I request him to communicate to Ambassador Antonio de Icaza the Committee's appreciation for his valuable contribution to the work of the Committee in his capacity as Committee Vice-Chairman at the last session of the General Assembly.

There being no other nomination, I take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and with established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Ambassador Andelfo García elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to express to the two Vice-Chairmen my warmest congratulations on the distinction that has been conferred upon them and assure them of my utmost support and cooperation in the joint discharge of the responsibility incumbent upon us.

I now call upon the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Sukayri (Jordan): At the outset allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee. I am confident that your qualifications, long experience and diplomatic skills will undoubtedly help you in successfully leading the deliberations on the items on our agenda throughout this session.

I should also like to commend His Excellency Ambassador Erdenechuluun and my colleagues who were members of the Bureau during the fiftieth session for their dedication and the marvellous work they achieved. I express my gratitude to Mr. Davinič, Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, and welcome our new Secretary, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, and his colleagues.

As the Rapporteur at the fiftieth session, I have the honour and privilege to nominate our colleague Mr. Parfait-Serge Onanga Anyanga of Gabon to assume the rapporteurship of the First Committee at the fifty-first session. Mr. Onanga Anyanga received his *diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées* from the University of Paris, in sociology. He also obtained a diploma in public administration, and as a counsellor at his country's Foreign Ministry Mr. Onanga-Anyanga assumed the position of Chief of the United Nations section and Cabinet Director of the Ministry of Environment. In August 1993 Mr. Onanga-Anyanga was appointed First Counsellor at the Gabonese Mission to the United Nations in New York, with special responsibilities for political and disarmament affairs, and he followed the deliberations of both the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. In 1994 Mr. Onanga-Anyanga participated in the United Nations disarmament programme, where he had the opportunity to familiarize himself with the different aspects of disarmament questions. Mr. Onanga-Anyanga has participated in various seminars and workshops dealing with peace and international security. Finally, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga is preparing a doctoral thesis at the University of Paris on the proliferation of conventional arms in Africa.

In view of his impressive qualifications, talents and long experience, I wish to nominate Mr. Onanga-Anayanga for the post of Rapporteur of the First Committee at the fifty-first session. I am confident that Mr. Onanga-Anyanga will be able to carry out his responsibilities most efficiently. I wish him and the other members of the Bureau every success under your guidance, Mr. Chairman, and I would also like to assure one and all of my delegation's fullest cooperation and support.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Jordan for nominating Mr. Onanga-Anyanga of Gabon for the post of Rapporteur of the First Committee. I trust that I am expressing the sentiments of the entire membership of the Committee when I extend our gratitude to Mr. Rajab Sukayri, who served as Rapporteur of the Committee and so ably carried out the task during the last session of the Committee.

We have just heard the representative of Jordan nominate Mr. Onanga-Anyanga of Gabon for the post of Rapporteur. There being no other nominations, I shall take it that Committee wishes again to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Onanga-Anyanga elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to express my cordial congratulations to the representative of Gabon upon his election as Rapporteur of the First Committee, and I invite him to take the place reserved for him at the podium.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the members of the First Committee to rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which reads as follows:

> "Congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session — or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation — after all the officers of the Committee have been elected."

Accordingly, I shall now call upon the representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Enkhsaikhan, who will speak on

behalf of Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, Chairman of the First Committee at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): On behalf of Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, Chairman of the First Committee at the last session of the General Assembly, it gives me great pleasure to extend his and my own heartfelt congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, as well as to the newly elected members of the Bureau of the First Committee. I am sure that under your guidance, Mr. Andelfo García of Columbia, Mr. André Mernier of Belgium — elected as Vice-Chairmen — and Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Gabon, elected as Rapporteur of the Committee — given their distinguished diplomatic skills and experience, coupled with the cooperation of Member States — will discharge their duties with remarkable success and make their contributions to furthering the work of this Committee.

We are commencing the activities of our Committee at a time when disarmament and international security issues are high on the agenda of the international community and when the future course of negotiations in the field is being determined.

Though we have to admit that considerable differences still exist among delegations on various issues, nevertheless there is general commitment to moving forward to implement the lofty goals of disarmament and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free, tension-free, conflict-free world, and to working out widely acceptable solutions to the pressing issues of the day.

In this spirit, I would like to wish you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau, every success in your new posts and to assure you of our full cooperation.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Belgium, Mr. Philippe Roland.

Mr. Roland (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to speak on behalf of Ambassador Mernier, the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, who has instructed me to thank members for the confidence which this Assembly has decided to confer upon him with the Vice-Chairmanship of the First Committee together with Ambassador Andelfo García. He would like to congratulate Ambassador Sychou, Permanent Representative of Belarus, for assuming the important function of Chairman of the First Committee and to assure him of his full cooperation.

Ambassador Mernier will endeavour to make himself as available as possible throughout this important session, so that his work may be pursued in a constructive and harmonious way. He has no doubt that the subject matter to be dealt with is of the greatest importance to the international community in the field of disarmament, which will make his task all the more demanding. He will endeavour to deserve the confidence of all delegations present here.

The Chairman: I now call upon the representative of Columbia, Ambassador Andelfo García.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish at the outset to convey my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee at the current session. We are certain that, under your guidance, the work of the Committee will be crowned with success. At the same time, I wish to express my most sincere appreciation to my friend, the representative of Mexico, Ambassador Gustavo Albin, for his kind words and to all representatives who today have honoured me by electing me Vice-Chairman of the First Committee. We are firmly committed to working in a friendly manner to ensure that the Committee will move forward in its deliberations and conclude its work successfully.

The Chairman: I look forward to the active cooperation and support of the representative of Colombia, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, in the discharge of my various responsibilities.

I now call on the representative of Gabon, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, Rapporteur of the First Committee.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): Permit me first to convey to you, Sir, the warm congratulations of the Gabonese delegation on your brilliant election to the chairmanship of the First Committee of the General Assembly. We are persuaded that your long experience and your perfect familiarity with the matters to be discussed are guaranties of the successful outcome of our deliberations. Our thanks also go to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, for the outstanding way in which he conducted our work last year. We also wish to express our thanks to all the outgoing Bureau, particularly to Mr. Rajab Sukayri of Jordan.

We also congratulate the other newly elected members of the Bureau, as well as to our new Secretary, Mr. Lin, and his team.

May I also address the gratitude of the Gabonese delegation to the Committee for having been kind enough to elect me to the rapporteurship of the present session of this Committee. Rest assured, Sir, that the Gabonese delegation and I will always be ready to contribute to the successful conduct of our work as well as to the success of your important mission.

The Chairman: I appreciate the Rapporteur's willingness to work closely with me and the other officers of the Committee. I am certain that I express not only my own sentiments, but also those of the two Vice-Chairmen, when I say that we shall work closely with him during the current session.

The Committee has concluded the consideration of the first item on its agenda.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I draw the attention of members of the Committee to document A/C.1/51/1 containing a letter dated 20 September 1996 addressed to me by the President of the General Assembly informing me that the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting had decided to allocate agenda items 60 to 81 inclusive to the First Committee for its consideration.

Before proceeding to the proposed programme of work and time-table as contained in document A/C.1/51/CRP.1, I wish to recall that at the open-ended informal meeting of the First Committee held on 8 October 1996 the Committee tentatively reached agreement, albeit on a referendum basis, on its programme of work and time-table for this session. Nevertheless, I should like to offer some explanations before providing a full account of the proposed programme of work and timetable.

Members will recall that, in accordance with established practice, the First Committee commences its substantive work only after the conclusion of the general debate in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly. Moreover, the President of the General Assembly appealed to the Chairman of the Main Committees of the General Assembly to conclude the work of the Committees by Friday, 29 November 1996, in order to enable the plenary of the Assembly to consider the reports of the Main Committees during the early part of December. Accordingly, as I indicated at the informal meeting, we should organize our programme in such a manner as to conclude the work of the First Committee by 27 November 1996, at the latest.

These parameters leave the First Committee with a period extending from Monday, 14 October, to Wednesday, 27 November, giving us a total of 33 working days in which the Committee could hold a maximum of 36 meetings, provided the requisite conference services are available. I believe that if we make a genuine and concerted effort to fully, efficiently and effectively utilize the conference facilities available to us, the Committee can accomplish its tasks without any undue difficulties. Taking into account all questions of timing and the Organization's acute financial exigencies, I hope that every effort will be made to avoid night and weekend meetings.

To recapitulate, the proposed programme of work and time-table has been prepared after taking into account the various useful initiatives that have evolved during the past several years. Consequently, I have tried to devise a programme of work and time-table based on the following proposals. The First Committee will begin its substantive session by holding a short general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items: item 61 and items 63 to 81. A total of 10 meetings — from Monday, 14 October, to Thursday, 24 October — will be allocated for that purpose. In this regard, I should like to urge delegations to kindly limit the time for delivery of their statements, if possible, to 15 minutes in order to enable all those members of the Committee wishing to participate in the general debate to do so within the short period of time devoted for that purpose.

I should like also to invite those delegations wishing to participate in the general debate to kindly inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible in order to enable the Committee to fully and constructively utilize the time and resources available to it. Furthermore, it should be noted that the deadline for the closure of the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items will be Monday, 14 October, at 6 p.m.

From Monday, 28 October, to Thursday, 31 October, the First Committee will hold informal structured discussions on specific subjects on the adopted thematic approach on disarmament and related international security agenda items. A total of five meetings will be set aside for this stage of work of the Committee. Exactly the same number of meetings was used by the Committee last year.

In this connection, I should like to inform members that I and the Officers of the Committee, with the assistance and cooperation of the Secretariat, will provide the necessary information to members of the Committee

well in advance regarding each subject and the time allocated for its consideration.

Thereafter, the First Committee will proceed to the next stage of its work: the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under disarmament and related international security agenda items. With regard to this phase of the work of the Committee, a period from Friday, 1 November, to Thursday, 7 November — a total of seven meetings — will be allocated for this stage of the work of the Committee.

The deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on all disarmament and related international security agenda items will be Tuesday, 29 October, at 6 p.m. It is my intention to request the cooperation of members in adhering strictly to that deadline. Delegations are strongly encouraged to submit and introduce their draft resolutions as early as possible. Furthermore, it is imperative for delegations to submit those draft resolutions that could entail programme budget implications as early as possible in order to enable the Secretariat to prepare the necessary statement of programme budget implications on time. It would also enable the Committee to take action on them with a view to meeting the mandatory deadline required for their submission to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. In this regard, I would like to indicate that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee need adequate time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution before the latter can be acted upon by the Assembly.

Subsequently, during the period from Friday, 8 November, to Monday, 18 November, the First Committee will proceed to take action on all draft resolutions submitted under disarmament and related international security agenda items. A total of 10 meetings will be at the disposal of the Committee for that stage of its work.

In this connection, I would like to indicate that it is my intention to retain, as was the practice in past years, the voting procedure of grouping draft resolutions by clusters at the current session of the General Assembly, and I shall present specific proposals concerning this in due course.

Finally, based on the logic of combining disarmament and related international security agenda items, as warranted, item 62, entitled "The question of Antarctica", would have to be dealt with during the latter part of the Committee's session. With respect to that agenda item, three meetings have been allocated for the general debate and consideration of and action on draft resolutions submitted under the item, from Monday, 25 November, to Tuesday, 26 November.

The deadline for submission of draft resolutions under item 62 on "The question of Antarctica" will be Monday, 18 November, at 6 p.m., in order to facilitate the Committee's work.

On the basis of the proposed programme of work and timetable that I have just briefly outlined, the First Committee should be able to conclude consideration of all the agenda items allocated to it within the time-frame I have set forth. It is my earnest hope that this programme of work and timetable, which was arrived at after due consultations and following past precedent, will meet with the approval of members of the Committee.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the First Committee adopts the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.1/51/CRP.1.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should now like to draw the attention of members of the Committee to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly affecting the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in General Assembly decision 34/401.

In order to utilize the time and conference resources available to the Committee efficiently and fully, I should like, with your cooperation and assistance, to convene the meetings of the Committee at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. sharp, and I would adjourn the meetings at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively. Allow me to emphasize the importance of punctuality in the interest of ensuring an effective and orderly organization of our work and achieving economies for the Organization.

At the same time, I wish to point out that I shall convene meetings of the First Committee only if there is a sufficient number of speakers inscribed on the list of speakers to address the Committee in order to enable us fully to use the time and conference facilities available in the most efficient and effective manner possible. I would like to add that resources allocated to a meeting cancelled at an appropriate time may be released for other meetings held within or outside the framework of the First Committee.

In this connection, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly the First Committee lost 38 hours and 5 minutes owing to late starting and early ending of meetings and that it had a utilization factor of 64 per cent, which is below the benchmark figure of 80 per cent established by the Committee on Conferences in 1993.

I would therefore like to urge members of the Committee once again to cooperate with me in order to enable us to make the most efficient use possible of available conference resources, particularly during the current session, when the demand for conference facilities and services is again expected to be brisk.

In this respect, I would like to draw the attention of members of the Committee to the text of a letter dated 6 September from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to me, which has been issued as a document of the Committee (A/C.1/51/2).

I would also like to inform you that I have received a letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences informing me that the Committee on Conferences, at its recent substantive session of 1996, considered an item on unedited verbatim transcripts, which were used for the first time by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its thirty-ninth session last June. During the discussion on the matter, the view was expressed that, while such transcripts were not an ideal solution, they could be issued and corrected more speedily than verbatim and summary records and appeared to be a satisfactory, cost-efficient measure. It was felt that it would be useful to have a thorough cost analysis of written meeting records and of unedited transcripts. The view was also expressed that unedited transcripts, which were still being used on an experimental basis at Vienna, were of doubtful benefit. Delegations there had yet to make recommendations about the change in records.

However, it was felt that it would be useful to inform bodies entitled to written meeting records about the cost benefits that might derive from using unedited transcripts and encourage them to request such transcripts at one meeting on an experimental basis to supplement their usual records. The Secretariat assured the Committee on Conferences that such an experiment could be absorbed within existing resources.

The Chairman of the Committee on Conferences was informed by the Secretariat that the notional cost of a verbatim record is $14,900, that of a summary record is $6,976, and that of an unedited transcript is $2,600. Unedited transcripts would thus appear to be the most cost-effective of the three type of record.

In its conclusions and recommendations on the matter, the Committee on Conferences requested its Chairman to transmit a letter to the chairmen of intergovernmental bodies that receive written meeting records to advise them of the information contained in paragraphs 1 to 3 that I have just brought to your attention.

The Committee on Conferences also requested its Chairman to invite those bodies to consider the possibility of requesting the Secretariat to issue unedited transcripts of one meeting for comparison purposes with a view to the possible substitution of such transcripts for their usual records in the future. In this connection, I would like to propose to the Committee that the eighth meeting of the First Committee, which will be held on Friday, 18 October, at 3 p.m., be selected for the suggested experimental purposes in order to allow the Secretariat to issue the unedited transcripts of that meeting for comparison.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to proceed accordingly.

It was so decided.

I therefore request the Secretariat to issue the unedited transcripts of the eighth meeting of the Committee, which will be convened on Friday, 18 October, at 3 p.m.

Last but not least, I would like to inform you that I have received a letter, dated 26 September 1996, from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee regarding a proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, which is contained in document A/51/6. The proposed programme concerning the First Committee is contained in Programme 1 of the medium-term plan for 1998-2001, as set out in document A/51/6 (Prog. 1).

The letter from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be issued as a document soon. I invite members of the Committee to kindly submit their comments or views in writing on Programme 1 of the aforementioned medium-term plan by Wednesday, 16 October 1996. In this connection, I would like to inform the Committee that the Fifth Committee intends to begin its consideration of the item on programme planning on Monday, 21 October. If I do not receive any comments by Wednesday, 16 October, I will consider that the First Committee has taken note of

the contents of the document that I referred to earlier and that there are no views or comments that the Committee wishes to transmit on the subject. Accordingly, I will transmit an appropriate communication to that effect to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee.

I would now like to give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee to make a statement.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): I would like, with the indulgence of the members of the Committee, to draw the attention of the Committee to the following points concerning the organization of work. First, the General Assembly has decided to depart during the fifty-first session, once again, from the rule that one quarter of the members must be present before a meeting of a Main Committee may be declared open and debate permitted to proceed. The General Assembly made this recommendation on the understanding that such a departure from the rules did not involve any permanent change in the relevant provisions of rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure, pertaining to the opening of meetings, whereby a majority of members must be present for any decision to be taken.

Secondly, as indicated in the programme of work and timetable, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items will be closed on Monday, 14 October, at 6 p.m. A number of delegations have already indicated their intention to participate in the general debate, and the Secretariat has taken note of those requests. In order to enable the First Committee to make full use of the time and conference facilities available to it, all those delegations wishing to participate in the general debate are requested kindly to inscribe their names on the list of speakers at their earliest convenience. In this regard, delegations are requested to provide a minimum of 30 copies of all prepared statements to the conference officers for conference servicing purposes.

Thirdly, I would like to appeal to members of the Committee to submit draft resolutions, especially draft resolutions that have programme budget implications, as far in advance as possible in order to allow sufficient time for the preparation by the Secretariat of the cost estimates and for the draft resolutions' consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, as well as to provide enough time for consultations. This would undoubtedly make it easier for the Secretariat to process the draft resolutions so as to make them available to the Committee as soon as possible.

Fourthly, in connection with draft resolutions and conference rooms, I request members of the Committee to note that draft resolutions, amendments and the names of sponsors thereof should be submitted to the Secretariat in writing to ensure accuracy and avoid any possible misunderstanding. Requests for the use of conference rooms for group meetings should also be submitted in writing as early as possible so that the necessary arrangements can be made in time.

Fifthly, I would also like to draw the attention of members of the Committee to General Assembly decision 34/401, and particularly to its provisions dealing with the explanation of vote and the exercise of the right of reply, namely paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of that decision, which pertain to those issues.

Sixthly, with regard to documentation, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to General Assembly resolution 50/206 C of 23 December 1995, in which the Assembly adopted several measures on the control and limitation of documentation. In this regard, I wish to read out operative paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of that resolution, which call for action by United Nations bodies:

> "6. *Requests* members of all bodies to exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports";
>
> "7. *Invites* all bodies to consider the possibility of biennializing or triennializing the presentation of reports, to review the necessity of all recurrent documents with a view to streamlining documentation and contributing to savings and to make appropriate recommendations";
>
> "8. *Encourages* members of intergovernmental bodies:
>
> *(a)* To consider the possibility of requesting oral reports, without prejudice to the provision of information to delegations in all the official languages;
>
> *(b)* To request consolidated reports on related topics under a single item or sub-item where appropriate and cost-effective."

In this connection, I would like to point out that, under operative paragraph 11 of the same resolution, the

General Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to present to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on the implementation of the measures spelled out in that resolution, including information on possible savings.

With regard to the documentation of the First Committee, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to document A/C.1/51/INF.1, which will be issued within a few days. This document will list, for the purpose of information and ready reference, all documents before the First Committee issued as of 14 October 1996. That list will be updated as appropriate.

Finally, I would like to ask delegations to be so kind as to submit to the Secretariat as soon as possible the list of members of their delegations to the First Committee in order to enable the Secretariat to circulate the Committee's membership list at the earliest possible time.

The Chairman: I would like to inform the members of the Committee that the Secretary-General of the United Nations will address the Committee at its first substantive meeting on Monday, 14 October. I urge all delegations to be punctual.

As decided, the First Committee will begin its substantive work on Monday, 14 October, at 10 a.m. sharp.

Mr. Rivero Rosario (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I apologize for taking the floor at this stage, but I shall be extremely brief.

When our delegation speaks in the general debate, it will convey its congratulations to you, Sir, and to the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur. At this stage, however, I wish to convey to all of them our readiness to cooperate with them.

I wish to make only one comment. If my delegation has understood correctly, we will be considering the matter of unedited transcripts on Friday, 18 October. My delegation believes that this is certainly an important question.

However, we have heard that, in the letter of the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, which will be issued at a later date, he asks the First Committee to consider the medium-term plan on disarmament, which will affect the direction of the Organization between 1998 and 2001. My delegation understood that Wednesday, 16 October had been set as the deadline to receive the views of delegations.

In this connection, we are obviously surprised to learn that we will be considering the question of records — a matter of crucial importance — at a meeting of the Committee, whereas on this other question we will be limited to the individual views of delegations rather than assigning a meeting for a debate on this important matter, as my delegation requested during informal consultations.

In view of this, my delegation suggests and requests that the Bureau consider at its first meeting the appropriate time for us to devote a meeting to discussing this important matter, and that it make a proposal to us in that regard at Monday's meeting.

The Chairman: I now call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): With regard to the question raised by the representative of Cuba regarding unedited transcripts, I would like to say that this issue concerns a kind of comparison between the unedited transcript records and the official verbatim records. This issue actually has nothing to do with the medium-term plan at all, but rather is for the sake of future reference in considering how to implement them.

Mrs. Arce (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The fifty-first session of the General Assembly will have to take a decision on the medium-term plan of the United Nations for the period 1998-2001. My delegation believes that this will be one of the most important issues on which all Member States will have to give their views, since, as we know, the next proposed budgets for the biennium 1998-1999 and 2000-2001 will be developed on the basis of what is adopted in the medium-term plan.

The authorities of my country have reviewed in great detail the proposal in Programme 1, which deals with political matters and encompasses the matter of disarmament. It is my country's view that a more detailed examination should be undertaken by the Main Committee, which addresses disarmament issues.

In that regard, my delegation believes that it would be advisable to have at least one working meeting of the First Committee at which delegations could express their points of view and, more importantly, make known their priorities in terms of what should be the guidelines of our Organization on disarmament issues.

While we take note of the proposal you have made, Sir, that delegations should be able to submit their comments in writing, we believe that it is precisely because of the importance of disarmament and the manner in which it will be reflected in the work of the Organization over the next four years that our Committee should devote at least one working meeting to an exchange of views on this point.

Furthermore, my delegation understands that a similar decision has been taken by other Committees of the General Assembly. In that regard, we will await the decision of the Bureau of our Committee.

Mr. Zaluar (Brazil): First of all, I would like to pledge the support of our delegation for all the efforts of the Chairman of the First Committee. I would also like to support the statements made by the representatives of Mexico and Cuba. Since we took part in consideration of the medium-term plan, we also understood that the Committees in general, and this Committee in particular, would take a closer look at the relevant sessions of the medium-term plan. We think that this should be one of our top priorities and that at least one session, as previous speakers have proposed, should be dedicated to an open-ended discussion between delegations on that subject.

Since the Fifth Committee is going to begin discussing this issue on 21 October, perhaps I might suggest that one of the sessions that is currently dedicated to the general debate might be allotted to this question. If this proves to be impossible, then I might suggest that during the structured discussion we should go for an in-depth discussion of this aspect of disarmament machinery, that is to say, the medium-term plan programme on disarmament. We think, as the President of the General Assembly put it so well, that we should not carry on with business as usual but try to be more result-oriented in the work of the General Assembly and in the work of the Main Committees in particular. We think that this is one example where a more result-oriented and more concrete discussions would perhaps lead to much better results in our work.

Although we have made these suggestions, but we would welcome with great satisfaction any suggestions that the Chairman, in consultation with the Secretariat, might make to enable the First Committee to hold a discussion on this subject.

The Chairman: I would like to inform the members of the Committee that, concerning the question that has been raised by the delegations of Cuba, Mexico and Brazil, I will consult with members of the Bureau and inform the Committee of the result of my consultations. I would like to assure the Committee that we will find the appropriate time for consideration of this very important issue.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.